CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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NOTE VERBALE DATED 15 JUNE 1995 FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION OF NEW ZEALAND ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARIAT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT BY THE NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. JIM BOLGER, TO THE NEW ZEALAND PARLIAMENT ON 14 JUNE 1995 CONCERNING THE DECISION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE TO RESUME NUCLEAR WEAPON TESTING ON MORUROA ATOLL IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

The New Zealand Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and has the honour to attach a statement by the New Zealand Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Jim Bolger, to the New Zealand Parliament on 14 June concerning the decision of the Government of France to resume nuclear weapon testing on Moruroa Atoll in the South Pacific.

The New Zealand Permanent Mission should be grateful if the Secretariat would distribute this text as an official document of the Conference.

GE.95-61908 (E)

FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTING

STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

14 JUNE 1995

I am sure the House will wish to join with me in deploring the announcement by the French President this morning that France would be resuming nuclear testing in the Pacific.

The French Government is flouting world opinion if it goes ahead with a resumption of testing. President Chirac's decision runs counter to the outcome of the recent Nuclear Non-Proliferation Conference, at which the nuclear powers were asked to exercise "utmost restraint" in the lead-up to a test ban treaty.

The decision will be greeted with outrage by our neighbours in the South Pacific. We have already spoken to the Australians, current Chair of the South Pacific Forum, and we will be in touch with all the countries of the region to discuss what response the region can make as a whole. In recent years relations between France and the region have improved, following suspension of testing by President Mitterrand. This decision again calls into question France's role in the region.

The Government has taken every opportunity to make known its opposition to a resumption of testing. I have already told this House of the discussions I had in Paris with President Chirac prior to his taking office. Vice-President Gore was also present. I followed this up on my return to New Zealand by writing to President Clinton asking if the possibility of France sharing United States simulation technology could be explored. My understanding was that this would remove the need for further testing at Moruroa; it is unfortunate that the French authorities do not seem to have taken this possibility further.

I understand that it has been suggested by President Chirac that New Zealand had been informed in advance of his announcement that France was about to resume nuclear testing. This is not the case. We were not forewarned of the decision. As recently as last week our Ambassador in Paris made representations to the French authorities that they should not resume testing. Now that they have decided to resume, our Ambassador will be urging the French Government to reconsider. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has this morning spoken to the French Foreign Minister urging reconsideration.

As to steps that we will now take in response to the announcement, we have decided to freeze elements of our military cooperation with France other than in activities with a humanitarian purpose, such as search and rescue in the Pacific and United Nations peacekeeping. Among the activities involved are:

a planned visit by HMNZS Waikato, Endeavour and Wellington to Noumea in November;

a platoon exchange with French forces in New Caledonia in September;

a RNZAF Staff College visit to New Caledonia in September;

visits to New Zealand by French naval vessels and aircraft.

There will be a review of any military procurement activities involving French suppliers.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs will not proceed with a planned visit to New Caledonia for VJ Day commemorations. Contacts involving other Ministers will be reviewed.

On the multilateral front, it is my Government's intention to raise this issue at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. In conjunction with our South Pacific Forum partners, we will also be looking at other ways of expressing our opposition, including at the United Nations in New York. We will of course take full advantage of other opportunities as they arise to register our views direct with the French Government.

Let me conclude by saying that it is not too late for France to reconsider its position. There is a great deal at stake. I am sure that I can speak for all members of this House, and for the people of New Zealand in urging the Government of France to reconsider its decision.